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TAGS: [AORC](#) [SCUL](#) [MEPP](#) [UNESCO](#)
SUBJECT: UNESCO: AMBASSADOR MEETS WITH WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE
CHAIR TO COUNTER "POLITICIZATION" OF CONSERVATION COMMITTEE
DECISIONS

11. Summary: The November 7 meeting of the Bureau of the World Heritage Committee focused on the agenda for the Committee's June 23-July 2, 2007 meeting in Christchurch, New Zealand. The Bureau heard progress reports from the WH Secretariat on a policy paper on the effects of climate change on World Heritage Sites (para 5) and on the management audit of the World Heritage Center (para 6). Bureau members reviewed the schedule of technical preparatory meetings leading up to the Christchurch conclave (para 14). The Bureau decided not to adopt Israel's proposal that the World Heritage Committee consider site nominations in groups sorted according to "typology" rather than by region. Eliminated from the agenda of the Bureau meeting was an item on "politicization" of World Heritage meetings. But before the Bureau meeting, Ambassador Oliver met with the Chair of the World Heritage Committee (New Zealand) and his team, to discuss means of reducing the "politicization" of the process by which World Heritage sites are chosen by the Committee for inscription on the World Heritage List (paras 2 and 3). The thorniness of these choices springs from the fact that developing countries are keenly engaged with the World Heritage site nomination process; they view it as an essential boost to tourism, and thus to the economies of their countries. End Summary.

Ambassador Oliver Meets with New Zealand Chair: Laying the Groundwork

12. On November 7, Tumu Te Heu Heu (New Zealand) chaired his first meeting of the Bureau (steering committee) of the World Heritage Committee. In advance of this meeting, Te Heu Heu consulted individually with some members of the committee, according special importance to his November 6 meeting with Ambassador Oliver. At the meeting, both sides expressed concern about the "politicization" of the WH committee in considering sites nominated for inscription on the list of World Heritage sites. Te Heu Heu stressed that New Zealand shares the U.S. concern. The New Zealand approach will be

to favor "dialogue" and have as few votes as possible on nominations. But they agreed that any votes should be done via secret ballot in order to make political lobbying ineffective. The

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New Zealanders also said that they wanted "community" to be the theme of the meeting, and to add this fifth "C" to the Committee's four strategic objectives: credibility, conservation, capacity building, and communication and awareness rising. New Zealand's chief objective for the Christchurch meeting will be to "bring the committee together"; they agreed with the Ambassador that committee members should not support sites that may not be of top quality simply because of regional solidarity.

¶3. Ambassador Oliver and Te Heu Heu agreed on the importance of the management audit of the World Heritage Center, and that there should be ample time at the Christchurch meeting to discuss it, and that discussion on this agenda item should take place relatively early in the meeting; they also agreed that adequate time should be devoted to discussion of the finances and administration of the WH Center. It will be key to decide on the timetable of the Christchurch meeting far enough in advance to ensure that delegations include experts who can deal with management and financial issues, not just conservation experts.

World Heritage Bureau Meeting: Inclusive not Exclusive

¶4. Thanks to the good relations that the Mission has developed with World Heritage Center Director Bandarin, the Mission was invited to attend as an observer the meeting of the Bureau of the World Heritage Committee (composed of representatives of the six regional groups). Tumu Te Heu Heu, who is also Paramount Chief of Ngati Tuwharetoa (a Maori tribe) opened by stressing his hope that the next meeting of the World Heritage Committee be "inclusive, not exclusive, and promote harmony, not polarization, as well as transparency and accountability in the World Heritage Program."

Progress Reports: Climate Change and Management Audit

¶5. Kishore Rao, the Deputy Director of the World Heritage center reviewed progress on two items discussed at the last meeting of the World Heritage Committee in Vilnius. On climate change, Rao noted that the World Heritage issue was featured at the recent Nairobi conference on climate change. The Vilnius meeting had endorsed the experts' report, and asked for follow-up actions. These included a paper that would appear in January-February 2007 as part of the World Heritage series that would compile case studies detailing the impact of climate change on World Heritage sites, to contribute to "awareness raising". The Secretariat will circulate case studies of specific sites cited in the paper for review by the concerned states parties. In Vilnius, the Committee also asked the advisory bodies and the World Heritage Center to present a policy paper at the Christchurch meeting that will be finalized at the meeting of the World Heritage General Assembly. This report will focus on guidance on issues that were not addressed in the experts' report: legal issues, danger listing, and synergies with other "climate change mechanisms." The plans to circulate the draft widely, Rao explained, beginning at a February 5-6 meeting with Stakeholders -- including regional organizations, advisory bodies, and representatives of other conventions -- that will formalize a draft. No funds were allocated for this effort, Rao noted, but the government of the Netherlands has contributed funds for the February meeting. Norway (the Group I representative on the Bureau) stressed that given the "tendency towards confrontation" engendered by the issue of the causes of climate change, it was decided at Vilnius to put the accent on coping with the effects of climate change on cultural heritage. Rao responded by drawing a distinction between mitigation efforts -- for which there are other international "mechanisms" -- and site level impact and adaptation. The report currently underway will focus sharply on sites, and on means of creating awareness of what is happening, as well as on policy options.

¶6. On the management audit, which Rao described as "comprehensive" and "completely" external, terms of reference had been prepared in consultation with the bureau and some WH committee members, and approved by the President of the WH Committee. Rao also outlined the process by which the auditor would be selected. Rao expressed the hope that the audit would be completed within three-six months; it is crucial that the audit be completed in time for the next WH committee meeting. (Note: the U.S. played a lead role in gaining acceptance of the management audit at the Vilnius meeting, and in reviewing the draft terms of reference. Rao later reported to the Mission that Deloitte had been chosen to do the audit, and would

present an audit plan by the end of November. End Note.)

Outstanding Value, Election Rules, a Fifth "C"?

¶17. Bureau members reviewed the draft agenda for the Christchurch meeting which was identical to that approved in Vilnius; Norway stressed that it would still be possible to add agenda items if they were very important. Describing it as a "heavy" agenda, Norway said it would be important to examine the timetable, to ensure that appropriate focus would be given to conservation. He agreed with the Secretariat's suggestion that all agenda items relating to the 2007 Assembly meeting be grouped together, including discussion on how to make Assembly meetings more strategic in focus.

¶18. In response to Norway's question, the Secretariat confirmed that discussion on outstanding universal value (OUV) and the Cairns-Suzhou decision would come after consideration of inscriptions on the WH list, because any decisions taken would not apply to sites considered at Christchurch. In response to Japan's query on the amount of time to be devoted to discussing outstanding universal value, Bandarin estimated two hours, so that more time can be devoted to consideration of nominated sites and the budget ("which will take at least three hours"). In response to Norway's advice that discussion of outstanding universal value at Christchurch not be just "another open-ended exchange", the Secretariat said that the discussion would center on analysis of

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past WH Committee decisions on this issue, based on an advisory body paper. Training material on OUV would also be examined.

¶19. The Chair of the World Heritage Committee signaled New Zealand's intention to propose adding a fifth "C" - for "community" -- to the Committee's strategic objectives. This strategic plan was adopted via a 2002 declaration and its implementation will be reviewed at the Christchurch meeting. New Zealand said that it would prepare a paper in advance of the meeting on its proposal.

¶10. The WH Secretariat noted that it would prepare a document on procedures for elections to the WH Committee to be considered at Christchurch. WH Center Director Bandarin noted that this exercise would require consultation with UNESCO's regional electoral groups, and study of other electoral models within UNESCO. Creation of regional electoral groups within the WH Committee would eliminate multiple rounds of voting, simplifying the procedure governing elections, which take place at the WH Assembly (coinciding with the UNESCO General Conference). Bandarin concluded that the WH Committee would make the final decision, noting that "change may be difficult. The devil we know is sometimes better."

Housekeeping Issues: Number, Order of Nominations

¶11. Order in which Nominations should be considered: WH Center Director Bandarin presented two proposals put forth by Michael Turner, the Israeli representative to the WH Committee, who was not present at the Bureau meeting. In a letter, Turner proposed that when nominations are considered, they should be grouped by type or category -- rock art sites, or modern heritage sites -- as opposed to by region, as is currently the case; this is to allow for more consistent decisions, and more focus on outstanding universal value.

He also requested a study be drafted on modern cultural heritage. Morocco, the first to speak on this item, criticized the proposal as having impact on the Committee's discussion of sites in Jerusalem "it is not for us, a technical committee" to make political decisions relating to borders. Benin and Norway questioned the need to change the current way of doing business, given the difficulty of arriving at a consistent typological system for classing WH sites; Norway added that the idea of ordering a paper on modern cultural heritage could be considered at a future point.

¶12. Number of nominations to be considered: WH Center Director Bandarin drew attention to the fact that the center was slated to consider 44 sites at the next WH Committee meeting, including extensions to existing sites, new sites, and nominations referred or deferred at past meetings. Given that a limit of 45 sites had been set by the Cairns-Suzhou decision, what would the Committee's reaction be if additional nominations deferred at past sessions were to move forward? Norway responded that it was likely that out of

the 44 sites currently on the slate, several would be withdrawn. In any case, there are clear criteria in the Cairns-Suzhou decision outlining which sites are to be given priority; the Secretariat must apply these rules. Bandarin demurred, saying that while some of the criteria are easy to apply -- those giving preference to sites nominated by states parties who currently have no or few sites on the WH list -- others are less so. He concluded by saying the Bureau could consider the issue in the future.

Getting Ready for Christchurch: Prep Meeting Schedule

¶13. On preparatory meetings leading up to the next WH Committee meeting in Christchurch, The Secretariat noted that a working group on indicators to be used in periodic reporting on World Heritage sites had met the day before, and that an information meeting on periodic reporting would begin the following day (November 8-9, to be reported septel).

¶14. The secretariat announced that in 2007 the following meetings are scheduled:
Working Group on Indicators, January 22-23, 2007; Periodic Reporting Reflection Year, January 24, 2007; Advisory Bodies Meeting, January 20-25, 2007; Climate Change and World Heritage, February 5-6, 2007; Information Meeting, May 29, 2007. The May meeting, Te Heu Heu explained, would be an informal meeting in Paris at which WH Committee members could review the agenda; his suggestion that a similar meeting take place in April was also approved by Bureau members.
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